ENGLISH CRITICISM OF POPE'S POETRY: 1744-1798

BY

ALFRED CAMPBELL AMES

B.A., University of Kansas, 1936

M.A., University of Illinois, 1937

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1943

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Professor Walter Graham, who has been throughout the director of my graduate work, I wish to express my gratitude for his constant advice, patience, and thorough exemplification of "the happy scholar." I am indebted to other teachers and friends for their encouragement and assistance.

The staff of the University of Illinois Library has been very helpful, and I am also appreciative of the special services rendered by other libraries, especially the John Newberry Library and the University of Chicago Library.

My deepest obligation of all is to my mother, for her constant help and inspiration.

R. UNIV.
BIBLIOTHEEK
LEIDEN

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"After the Demise of King Alexander, the Literary State relapsed again into a Democracy, or rather indeed into downright Anarchy." With this statement Henry Fielding described the state of English letters in the years immediately following the death of Alexander Pope. The king was dead, and there was no king to stand in the immediate succession.

Students of English literature are agreed in finding 1798 an epochal date, the first year in what is usually referred to as the reign of English romanticism. The poetic dynasty ushered in by Wordsworth and Coleridge was recognizably a dynasty different from that represented by Alexander Pope. To survey the fame of the late King Alexander in the interevning years between 1744, the date of his death, and 1798, the present study addresses itself. In the interregnum of forty-five years, what was English critical opinion of Pope's poetry?

The thesis of which the following pages are an abstract opens with a survey of modern scholarly works which have some real or apparent bearing on the present subject. No trace of any study remotely approaching a detailed survey of Pope's reputation as poet is to be found. Subject to inevitable limitations, the writer has attempted to discharge an hitherto unfulfilled function. Any survey of critical opinion must of necessity be based on incomplete evidence. The volume of criticism is too large and too widely scattered to be studied in anything approaching completeness. Availability is a limiting factor; the present study is principally derived from material to be found in 1942 in three Illinois libraries: the Library of the University of Illinois, the Harper Memorial Library of the University of Chicago, and the Newberry Library, Chicago. Within my limits of time, space, and fallibility, I have endeavored to make a comprehensive and sufficient sampling. The bibliography is based on relevant sections of the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature,* supplemented by other bibliographies and particularly by a careful examination of the complete files of such eighteenth-century periodicals as the *Gentleman's Magazine,* the *Critical Review,* the *Monthly Review,* and the *Analytical Review.* Literally hun-

dreds of items that yielded no pertinent matter were examined. The bibliography following this thesis contains only items of some known critical interest to the student of the subject, and consists of over two hundred eighteenth-century books, well over a hundred contemporary reviews of independent significance, and about two hundred fifty items from eighteenth-century periodicals. Some of this material is important and generally known, at least casually; much of it is obscure and largely deservedly so.

Each chapter consists of two parts—a detailed discussion of evidence, including literal quotations; and an analysis and summary, intended to show in brief the progress of the investigation. To a considerable extent, this thesis is an allusion book of literary criticism, presenting in chronological order the substance and often the precise wording of salient comment on Pope's poetry. The criticism granted admittance is the wheat remaining from much winnowing. As rediscovery of forgotten and neglected criticism and as refining from irrelevancies and other dross of well-known criticism, this chronicle of opinion will be, it is hoped, of interest to the Pope specialist and to any others intertested in the literary history of the period under consideration. Obviously the chronicle part of this study does not submit to the summarization required in an abstract. The pages that follow are devoted to the essential part of the accompanying analysis and summary of the course of Pope criticism between 1744 and 1798.

Upon Pope's death in 1744 there arose a chorus of funeral eulogy entirely in keeping with Pope's exalted position in literary society. No train of hired mourners ever staged a more impressive spectacle than did the verse writers in the *Gentleman's* and the *London*. Hostile comment either experienced the fate of much other ephemeral writing or, like Aaron Hill's letter to Richardson, was private. William Ayre in his *Memoirs . . . of Alexander Pope* (1745), John Brown in his *Essay on Satire* (1745), William Mason in his *Musaeus* (1747), and others asserted that Pope was the greatest English poet to date. But more moderate views were current from the first. Both Thomas and

Joseph Warton were in print before 1750, expressing a preference for older poets. Mark Akenside, in a remarkable "Ballance of Poets" (1746), rated Pope as inferior to Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser. In view of the dangers of oversimplification, it should be emphasized that even at the very beginning of the period under consideration different critical views were expressed, that even in the years immediately following Pope's death, Pope's poetry was unfavorably compared with that of Spenser and Milton.

In keeping with funeral custom, early critics made much of the personal virtue of the late deceased. Moralistic criticism held Pope's didactic poems in especially high regard. The *Pastorals* and the *Iliad* received much attention around the mid-century; but the *Rape of the Lock* and *Windsor Forest*, favorites of pre-romantic critics, commanded relatively little. The prosodic issue of rhyme vs. blank verse, soon to overshadow in the minds of many the question of the merits of any individual writer, was not seriously raised before 1750.

In William Warburton's nine-volume edition of Pope's *Works*, first published in 1751 and for almost all the rest of the century the standard edition, we come to the first really large body of Pope criticism since 1744. Two particularly notable qualities of Warburton's criticism are these: (1) he was almost wholly preoccupied with Pope's didactic and satiric verse; (2) in his comments on Pope's work as a whole, he anticipated remarkably later criticisms of his subject, asserting Pope's preeminence in the very qualities for the alleged lack of which he was to be most severely criticized: elevation, originality, efficient use of talents, and unaffected diction. Warburton's greatest interest, if individual notes be a sufficient indication, was in Pope's imitation of classical authors. In commenting on this subject, Warburton did not hesitate to point out numerous passages in which he considered that Pope fell below his original. On other details, he could be almost incredibly uncritical, giving high praise to the odes, which Ayre had previously strongly censured. An examination of one hundred seventy-five comments on particular passages yields the figure of seventy-six per cent favorable—Warburton found three "beauties" to every "blemish." An over-

moralistic bias cropped out occasionally, though Warburton avoided saying anything about the poem which gave most offense on moral grounds, *Eloisa to Abelard*. Of Pope's preeminent position he had no doubt, crediting his subject with the invention of a new kind of the sublime, created by the fusion of wit and sublimity, attributing to him all the virtues to be insisted upon by the romantic writers of the Lake School. Warburton's Pope criticism, though voluminous, was adulterated with masses of notes devoted to explaining the obvious, making discoveries of esoteric meanings, twitting aggressively numerous contemporaries. It was the superogatory comment and the ill-tempered personalities which elicited what unfavorable criticism the edition received. Warburton's foes, it is noteworthy, were careful to pay their deferential respects to Pope.

Uncritical appreciation of Pope's poems continued in considerable volume. Richard Hurd, John Gilbert Cooper, and others praised Pope particularly for his close and constant reflection of the writers of antiquity. The Augustan neo-classicism of Pope's day survived the poet, and has added appreciably to his fame in scholarly quarters from his own time even to the present day. Naturally, the Augustan afterglow was perhaps at its strongest in the 1750's. Naturally, also, reaction set in by this decade, a reaction vigorous and intemperate. To be sure, the practice of the heroic couplet had never become so nearly universal as hasty generalization might tend to suggest; Milton's poetry, for example, enjoyed a healthy popularity throughout the period here considered, 1744-1798. But it was in the fifties that the rebellion against Pope's favorite vehicle broke out with volcanic vigor, and that one could find confident sneers about hanging bells and about jingling. This rebellion was probably motivated principally by doctrinaire theory and by revulsion against the abuse of the couplet in the hands of writers devoid of Pope's genius, rather than by any reaction against Pope's masterly style. Yet inevitably the couplet-wreckers took a blow or two at Pope in the course of attacking his medium. Thomas Sheridan's *British Education* (1756), a conspicuous representative of the new criticism, not only censured taste for rhyme as a "vile Gothick taste," but also charged Pope's poetry with pro-

ducing "great weariness and satiety."

In 1753 Robert Shiels contributed to Cibber's *Lives of the Poets* a biography and critical evaluation of Pope which, like Akenside's "Ballance of Poets," is a neglected work of considerable importance. Without hesitation, Shiels ranked Pope below Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden, paid scant attention to the popular didactic poems, and announced the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad* to be the principal props of Pope's later fame. Shiels also stated a preference for lyric to satiric poetry, the former being in his opinion inherently "a more excellent kind of writing." In a prolonged comparison of Pope with Dryden, Shiels came to this conclusion: "We admire Dryden as the greater genius, and Pope as the most pleasing versifier." These ideas are the critical concepts of which Joseph Warton has long been considered the pioneer.

Joseph Warton, however, in 1753 published "Reflections on Didactic Poetry," in which he praised the *Essay on Man* for its "sublimity" and "spirit"—hardly revolutionary criticism. His *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (vol. I, 1756), however, is of much greater importance. It is indubitably the most discussed item of eighteenth-century Pope criticism. Of all eighteenth-century critiques of Pope's poetry, it is the only one to be accorded much attention by modern scholars. There is ample evidence for concluding that Warton's position in Pope criticism has been frequently misrepresented, even in high scholarly quarters. Beginning with the absolute expressions of a couple of students in Germany to the effect that Warton claimed Pope had no genius at all and that he conducted a deliberate campaign against Pope's exalted status, the Warton legend grew in the hands of Sir Edmund Gosse, who asserted that the *Essay* met with "universal disfavour" as a subversive document. Later writers added yet more, and stated that Warton "overthrew" Pope and his school, that he tolled the bell over the Augustan poetic order, that he attacked with heavy artillery and sensational daring the stronghold of classicism, that he was the St. George of the new era.

What did Warton do? He enunciated critical principles essential to full appreciation of romantic literature, and in that

respect doubtless was a pioneer in his own century. In specific Pope criticism, Warton was preponderantly favorable to Pope. He did subordinate Pope to the greatest names of earlier English poetry; he did assert that the kinds of writing in which Pope specialized were inherently less excellent than other kinds in which he obviously wrote little of nothing; he did select the *Rape of the Lock*, rather than any didactic poem, as Pope's masterpiece. But Shiels had done as much before him. That Warton's approval of Pope was limited is not to say that it was non-existent. The dedicatory letter to Young, with its famous question, "What is there transcendently sublime or pathetic in Pope?" and its characterization of Pope in the words of Voltaire on Boileau, does indeed suggest hostility to Pope's fame. But he who reads the *Essay* itself will find in it much hearty praise of Pope's poems. Seventy-seven comments on particular lines yield a proportion of beauties to blemishes of three to one, exactly the ratio of the worshipful Warburton. The reception accorded Warton's essay was favorable and placid, amply demonstrating that the book was not considered startling. Subsequent criticism and poetic practice conclusively demonstrated that neither Warton nor anyone else had "overthrown" Pope in the esteem of the reading public. In short, Warton's *Essay* was not novel, nor hostile, nor even successful in limiting even at high levels the praise heaped on Pope's poetry. Warton was not an iconoclast, and hardly a pioneer in Pope criticism. After all, Warton was to rate Pope above Dryden, and any critic who leaves a poet in fourth place among English poets before 1782 is not very hostile to the fame of that poet. Both the details and the generalities of Warton's *Essay* support the idea that Warton did not think of himself as any knight-errant out to slay a dragon.

Pope criticism between Warton's first volume and Ruffhead's *Life* (1769) was singularly confused. The rebels against rhyme urged their attack with zeal, necessarily casting strong aspersions on the quality of Pope's writing. Foremost in the ranks was Edward Young, who in his *Conjectures on Originnal Composition* (1759) relegated rhyme to "lesser poetry" and scored Pope for idolatrous imitativeness. Henry Home, Lord Kames, included Pope in his sweeping censures. Daniel Webb sneered

at rhyme and declared Pope tiresome. The most radical of the radicals, John Langhorne, went to the extremity of saying that "rhyming versification" simply did "not come under the denomination of poetry." Samuel Langley, an obscure clergyman, launched an obscure but vehement attack against Pope's *Homer*. Charles Churchill and John Wilkes spoke disparagingly of Pope, though they were politicians enough in letters as in government to be able to recognize the high esteem Pope enjoyed with the public. In short, a substantial array of critics endeavored to deflate Pope's reputation. The principal cause is not far to seek—and it is not Joseph Warton. It is rather the perfectly natural reaction to the constant use of the couplet measure by all sorts of writers, most of them bad, on all sorts of occasions, many of them unsuitable for the use of the couplet measure. Also, there will always be in England some iconoclasts, not decorous critics such as Warton, but extremists such as Langley and Langhorne, who are ready to tilt at any windmill.

There were extremists on the other side, too. A 1758 scale of poets rated Pope as first, Shakespeare sixth, Spenser eleventh. A 1764 magazine article gave Pope first place among English poets. More substantial criticism favorable to Pope, however, made no such claims, but concerned itself with combatting the streak of intolerance in Warton. Lord Lyttleton in 1760, Arthur Murphy in 1762, and William Shenstone in 1764 were among those who urged a catholicity of tastes that could find the values of imagination and passion in the works of Pope himself. Shenstone, in a mild way, expressed much the same views as Warton, but whereas Warton appeared to some much more novel and startling than he either was or intended to be, Shenstone's eminently reasonable criticism, devoid of a ready handle for controversialists, has been virtually ignored.

It is eloquent of the vitality of Pope's high reputation that the minor, miscellaneous references to Pope were through the years between 1756 and 1769, as at other times, generally favorable to Pope. The very vehemence of those who wished to diminish Pope's standing bore witness to the strength of Pope's hold on English readers.

The world has agreed to think poorly of Owen Ruffhead's

Life of Pope (1769). Ruffhead's approval was so indiscriminate and so ill supported by anything other than enthusiasm that it approaches being critically worthless. His shifting ground as to the proper criteria of judgment (moral effect, style, the pathetic and sublime—one accepted after another as the chief if not the only test) enabled him to demonstrate that he would maintain Pope's greatness on any major premise one cared to propose, but also proved him to have no point of view himself. Constantly crying, *"Pulchre, recte!"* Ruffhead passed judgment on over two hundred fifty specific passages in Pope, finding eighty-four per cent of them good. The contemporary reviews were unanimous in damning Ruffhead's book, and also unanimous in making it clear that they had no intention of using Ruffhead as a stick with which to beat Pope.

Generalization about criticism of Pope between 1756 and 1769 would be ill-advised. It will not do to say either that Pope's reputation was unquestioned or that Pope's reputation was in an eclipse. It will not do to say that it was in the penumbra of an eclipse to come. Nor can it be said that Pope's reputation was a bone of contention between opposing camps, for to a great extent the critics ignored each other, and, furthermore, the lines were not clearly drawn. A new pattern, however, can be seen to be beginning to emerge. It is true that the latter part of the eighteenth century was a period of "romantic" criticism emancipated from bondage to neo-classic "rules." Much more than is generally appreciated, the new,"revolutionary" critical ideas were unchallenged commonplaces. But it must be noted that writers imbued with enthusiasm for the older writers, for prosodic freedom, for pathos, sublimity, and enthusiasm itself, showed some disposition to join with the neo-Augustans in appreciation of Pope's indubitable merits. The chief issue, which had been the merit of Pope's didactic poems, was becoming the merit of Pope's *Homer.*

Following the time of confusion, the criticism of the seventies showed marked signs of reconciliation between previously conflicting critical positions. The admirers of Pope had brought the essential elements of his fame through the storm of reaction, and critics were generally agreed on a respectful attitude towards

Pope. Some writers had sought to keep neo-classicism from hardening into a tyrannical vested interest. These latter critics had substantially achieved their ends also, and had enlarged the scope of the literary public's poetic appreciation to include the work of the relatively irregular writers of pre-Augustan times.

Though extremist partisan criticisms still appeared, particularly in the periodicals, moderation was characteristic of critics of Pope who published in the seventies. Opposition was negligible, and Pope's friends were not disposed to court disaster or argument by extravagant claims. John Ogilvie, Alexander Gerard, William Mitford, and even a mollified Thomas Sheridan published temperate appreciations of Pope's poems. James Beattie, in his *Essays* (1776), expressed a notable critical synthesis. In giving Pope the preference over Dryden, Beattie expressed as his reasons the pathos and sublimity of *Eloisa* and the *Unfortunate Lady* and the sublimity of the *Essay on Man* and the *Messiah*. Beattie accepted romantic criteria, and by them adjudged Pope a success. Vicesimus Knox seconded Shenstone's earlier plea for an adjournment of partisanship and for a catholicity of taste. The plea was lost upon Percival Stockdale, who in 1778 published his ridiculously laudatory *Inquiry into the Nature and Genuine Laws of Poetry*. Stockdale's numerous references to Warton, in rebuttal of whom he was writing, were in very poor taste and were critically impotent. His book, completely devoid of neo-classic poise and restraint in its excessive eulogy of Pope, gains interest from the fact that it received the approval of men of more genius than Stockdale, men such as Garrick, Burke, and Johnson.

Johnson's *Life of Pope* (1781), warmly appreciative and yet plainly sensible, was the true representative of the critical temper of the time. Certainly so far as his Pope criticism is concerned, it is a mistake to think of Johnson as a belated reactionary, an anachronism in his own day. Pope's principal characteristics, according to Johnson, were good sense and genius, with good sense significantly placed first. Of Pope's genius, in accord with the general moderation of the time, Johnson did not speak extravagantly; he credited Pope with genius, but in a lesser portion than Dryden. Johnson, using the terms in the

wide sense for which Arthur Murphy had pleaded, found both invention and imagination in Pope's works. In his criticism, Johnson followed no party line. He differentiated himself from the stern neo-classical position by damning the *Essay on Man,* from moralistic criticism by commending *Eloisa to Abelard,* from pre-romanticism by lauding the *Essay on Criticism* and the *Iliad* and by spurning the *Unfortunate Lady.* Johnson' *Life of Pope* is not a representative of any one school of thought so much as it is a mature and unbiased expression of a writer himself possessed of good sense and genius. Furthermore, it is truly representative of the moderate and well-grounded appreciation of Pope which characterized criticism in the seventies.

William Cowper in a letter in 1782 expressed full agreement with Johnson's critique on Pope. He went further than Johnson would be likely to do in calling Pope "mechanical," but he had no mind to deny Pope genius. Cowper's explicitly stated agreement with Johnson should not be lost sight of, or discounted as insincere, for it is eloquent of the esteem in which Pope was held by him who, as author of a blank-verse *Homer,* most seriously challenged Pope in the final years of the century. In the same year. 1782, Warton published the second volume of his famous *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope.* The conclusion of this volume provided a much belated companion piece to the controversial dedication to Young. In this conclusion Warton answered his question as to where Pope should be placed: "the *First* of *Ethical* authors in verse . . . *next* to *Milton,* and just above *Dryden.*" As Warton said, this was "no narrow and niggardly encomium." Nor was this concluding estimate unsupported by the bulk of the volume. In dealing with the didactic and satiric poems of Pope's later career, poems which Warton did not consider Pope's best claims to fame, the critic was most generous with his praise. He differed sharply, to Pope's advantage, with Johnson's estimate of the *Essay on Man.* He placed Pope's *Moral Essays* above all the moral poems of classic France. In more than eight score comments upon specific passages, Warton found two "beauties" to every "blemish." This volume, as Boswell and many others of Warton's contemporaries were quick to realize, conclusively demonstrated that Warton's intentions

with respect to Pope were not revolutionary or, perhaps, even radical. He differed from Warburton and Ruffhead not by attacking the poet whom they lauded, but by giving Pope admiration less uncritical and more moderate than theirs.

William Hayley, like Warton, was a transition figure in criticism. Admitting the claim that didactic and satiric verse were inherently below the highest rank, he yet asserted that Pope had conclusively demonstrated that he was capable of writing the most elevated poetry, but from social and philanthropic motives had turned to satire. A less sober defense of Pope came from Thomas Tyers of Vauxhall Gardens, in his *Historical Rhapsody on Mr. Pope* (1781, 1782). Hugh Blair published in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* an estimate in which he asserted that Pope did not attain the highest levels of poetic achievement, but that his poetry was of very high merit. "Within a certain limited region," Blair wrote, "he has been outdone by no poet." James Beattie, who would probably circumscribe that region less narrowly than Blair, reaffirmed in 1783 his preference for Pope over Dryden.

The publication in 1785 of Cowper's "Critical Remarks on Pope's Homer" marked something of a turning point. Cowper's approach was conciliatory, affirming that "every species of poetical merit" was to be found in Pope's original poems. But the criticism of the *Homer* for unworthy accommodations to the demands of rhyme and for failure to maintain a Homeric simplicity was doubtless damaging. Appearing in the open forum of the *Gentleman's Magazine,* Cowper's critical essay did not elicit a single rebuttal. Privately, Cowper used more provocative language than in his diplomatic essay.

In the eighties vigorous criticism of Pope was not uncommon. John Scott analyzed *Windsor Forest* in much the manner of Johnson's essay on Pope's *Epitaphs.* Henry Headley, a pupil of Thomas Warton, called for "more poetry and less versification" than were to be found in Pope, and in *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry* (1787) made a frontal attack on the school of Pope imitators. According to Headley (who was admittedly out of step with most of his contemporaries), the Queen Anne writers did nothing to extend or embellish "the higher regions

of poesy." William Belsham, in his *Essays* (1798), censured Pope's verse as lacking in simplicity, tenderness, pathos, loftiness, and majesty, though interestingly enough he excepted the *Iliad* from his strictures. His favorites among Pope's poems were the *Eloisa* and the *Rape of the Lock*. George Richards was largely derogatory, claiming that both Dryden and Pope had introduced refinements "prejudicial in their tendency."

Significantly, however, the lower levels of criticism were unshaken in their devotion to Pope. Appreciative references in periodicals showed that whatever conflicts there might be in the higher reaches, Pope still enjoyed in general the suffrages of the obscure. An exception to this statement must be made for Joseph Weston, whose indiscretion and malevolence provoked a long controversy, mostly in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* from 1789 to 1791. Two score contributions to the debate appeared, written by controversialists none of whom was of any particular reputation except for Anna Seward. Miss Seward's case in defense of Pope was much the more popular among the articulate readers who joined the fray. The hapless Weston by no means made the most of his cause; his indiscretions betrayed him on every hand. William Gifford, in his *Baviad*, finally butchered Weston in his own inimitable way.

In short, Pope's reputation continued firm throughout the eighties, but it was more seriously and persistently challenged than before. The synthesis of the seventies had broken down somewhat. The growth of the pre-romantic spirit was signalized by both praise and censure of Pope on the basis of romantic criteria of excellence.

The continuity of minor criticism, always preponderantly favorable to Pope, was unbroken in the last decade of the century. Overshadowing the minor Pope critics of the time, however, were William Cowper and Gilbert Wakefield. In 1791 Cowper published his rival translation of Homer. In his preface he again asserted his "warmest" admiration for Pope's original poems, stated that Pope had done as well translating Homer as could be done in heroic couplets, and disclaimed any contest with his predecessor. His translation had had the way prepared for it by decades of complaints of infidelity and monotony in Pope's

version, and one would expect it to have been well received. It was well received, but published reviews showed clearly that Pope still held the suffrages of many readers, and that Cowper's attempt by no means drove the older translation from the field. The division of critical opinion was demonstrated further by the diverse reactions to the position of Alexander Tytler's *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1791), which was that the translator should be allowed very considerable leeway.

Lesser critics disagreed sharply as to Pope's merits, but Gilbert Wakefield was of no uncertain mind. By virtue of his incomplete edition (1794), his *Observances on Pope* (1796), and his edition of Pope's *Homer* (1796) the most substantial writer on Pope after Johnson, Wakefield was vehemently laudatory of his subject's poems and translations. Yet Wakefield was a transitional figure. The unstinting praise he gave to the arch-neoclassicist Pope was on the basis of thoroughly romantic criteria. Wakefield did not emphasize Pope's urbanity and good sense, his skillful imitations or his polished versification, but his invention, his "enthusiastic raptures," and his "vigor and magnificence of phrase." In his criticism of individual passages, Wakefield pointed out many lines for censure, but whereas his derogation was almost always narrowly limited in application, his praise was sweeping. According to Wakefield, Pope was "without a rival in antient or modern times" "for delicacy of feeling, for accuracy of judgement, poignancy of wit, urbanity of humor, vivacity of fancy, discernment of human character, solemnity of pathos, pregnancy of sentiment, rectitude of taste, comprehensive diction, melodious numbers, and dignified morality." Wakefield gave strong adverse criticisms to the translations as works of scholarship, thus in effect supporting Cowper's strictures of 1785, but he gave enthusiastic praise to them as a "paradise of the Muses." Wakefield demonstrated more conclusively, perhaps, than any one else before Byron that it was possible to be possessed of typical "romantic" traits and still have a strong affection for the poems of Alexander Pope.

Lesser critics such as Robert Alves, Robert Anderson, and Alexander Thomson generally gave substantial if limited praise to Pope in the last years of the century. But what of the man

who has been said to have "overthrown" Pope back in 1756—Joseph Warton? In 1797 he published with considerable fanfare his disappointing edition of Pope, with intention to supplant Warburton as standard editor. The notes were made up largely of fragments from his *Essay,* and added little new criticism. Warton's almost apologetic reaffirmation of his position, however, is of interest. He still maintained that epic and dramatic poetry are "more poetic" than are didactic and satiric poetry, and that since Pope by choice, not of necessity, concentrated in the latter rather than the former field, he was not the most "poetic" of poets. That honor he reserved for Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, and for them only among English poets. Derogation of Pope's genius, except for insistence on subordinating him to the mighty three, was by no means his object. In fact, Warton plainly stated that he considered that Dr. Johnson had been too severe with Pope, that he himself thought better of Pope than had Johnson. Warton's Pope criticism showed little change with the passage of time, except that he became dubious of the morality of *Eloisa* and more appreciative than he had been of the Horatian imitations.

After Warton's edition and before the terminal date of this study there was little significant Pope criticism. In minor items from 1797 and 1798 are to be found the old, standard criticisms of Pope's poetry, and the old, familiar assertions of Pope's preeminence among English poets. The divided mind of eighteenth-century Pope criticism presisted from the beginning to the end. But the balance was always favorable to Pope's high reputation. Parallel to the persistence of neo-classic taste was a succession of critics who found in Pope's poems, or who read into them, all the romantic virtues, and who praised him for them. The change brought by the years was not a decline in Pope's popularity so much as it was a change in the reasons most often advanced for admiring him. Up to 1800 and beyond, Pope's prestige continued to be what it had been from long before his death, a stabilizing influence on the form and character of English poetry.

The relation of Pope to the Wordsworth of the prefaces to *Lyrical Ballads* requires a few words. Wordsworth heartily

disagreed with the thesis advanced by Warton, that some subject matter, such as "modern manners," was inherently inferior poetic material. It may be unusual, but it is not unreasonable, to think of Pope and Wordsworth as both championing the significance for poetry of the commonplace subject. Pope was urban, Wordsworth rural in emphasis; but neither indulged in the far-brought or exotic subject matter popular among the romantic devotees of Ossian. And though Wordsworth may have had in mind emulation rather than, as Pope, imitation, the romantic poet urged close study of "the best models" as a necessary discipline for the poet. When Wordsworth complained of "gaudy and inane" diction, he was thinking not so much of Pope as of Gray. In emphasis upon good sense as "one property of all good poetry" (Wordsworth's phrase), Pope and Wordsworth were at one. Likewise, Wordsworth's argument in favor of regular metrical language was a distinct rebuff to the rebels against the "chains" of versification and to those who, like Warton, maintained that the essence of poetry could and must be able to survive transmutation into a prose paraphrase.

Of course, Wordsworth was by no means another Pope in his theory. His emphasis on common life, imagination, and emotion (though recollected in tranquillity), his democratic sympathies, and his avoidance of "false refinement" clearly differentiate Wordsworth from Pope's theory and practice. But we are not to think of Wordsworth as in poetic theory opposite to Pope, but rather as one who synthesized the classical thesis of Pope and the anti-classical antithesis of Pope's eighteenth-century detractors. The theory and the practice of the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 and 1800 have little in common with the unbridled licentiousness of extreme romanticists before and after Wordsworth. The discipline of Augustan poetry mingled with the rediscovered melody and simplicity of the ballads and of Elizabethan lyrics to become one of several basic strains in the consummate flowering of English poetry in the romantic, Victorian, and Georgian periods.

The present time, it is agreed, is a time when divisive influences are regnant, destroying the fabric of potential fellowship

between race and race, continent and continent, nation and nation, segment of opinion and segment of opinion. Man's perverse capacity for ill-will and animosity never, perhaps, has had a more nearly full realization in fact than now. And it is agreed that what hope there is to be for the immediate future lies in the possibility that in our own time we may see unprecedented cooperation and joint endeavor for the common good, that insight into the essential oneness of humankind may become general and the basis of political and economic organization. Limited fraternity means limited liberty.

The rage for classification and oversimplification, the inability or unwillingness to face the complexities of reality, has in the field of the study of literature led to arbitrary divisions less fatal than political divisions but no less unreasonable. There have been many fighting slogans on the battle fields of criticism. Partisanship has been high, and admiration for one style of writing has all too often been associated with inability to appreciate another. The contentions of minor critics have been erroneously attributed to eminent literary figures, and have been projected upon whole epochs of time. Any investigation that demonstrates that many divisions and alleged contradictions have been largely devoid of substance, that the kinship of principle between different schools of thought is much closer than has been supposed, that conceptions of unanimity in praise or censure are unfounded, may perhaps contribute a little to moderating the rage for division and prejudiced partisanship. This present study clearly establishes the constancy of a plurality of critical viewpoints throughout the period under consideration, and demonstrates also a surprising amount of agreement between such diverse critics as Warton and Johnson and Cowper. Admiration of Pope to the point of acclaiming him the greatest of English poets persisted to the end of the century; appraisal of Pope as definitely below Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser existed at the moment of Pope's death; Pope was both censured and praised on the basis of both classical and romantic criteria; the allegedly revolutionary critics were neither as extreme nor as novel as they have been represented. The latter eighteenth-century criticisms and critics of Pope show unity in diversity.

This account began with Fielding's figure of a literary kingdom changed into a realm without absolutism. The subject of this study upon investigation does show a lack of absolutism and does show a community of values. Pope criticism between 1744 and 1798 manifested the variety and diversity which, as the sure signs of freedom and the absence of regimentation, are much to be valued. It manifested also a high degree of consistency with itself, with its subject, with the temper of the past time and the temper of the future. Taken by and large, it makes sense to the student possessed of disciplined and catholic taste, whatever his individual bent. *Unitas fratrum!*

VITA

Alfred Campbell Ames was born in Spokane, Washington, on July 21, 1916. Having received his elementary and secondary schooling in several Mid-western towns, he was graduated from high school at Beverly, Kansas, in 1932. He entered the University of Kansas in the fall of 1932 on a Summerfield Scholarship, which he held throughout his college course. The University of Kansas granted him the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1936. In the fall of the same year he entered the Graduate School of the University of Illinois as a service scholar in English, and took the degree of Master of Arts in June, 1937. Since September, 1937, he has been an assistant in English at the University of Illinois, and, in addition to his teaching, has completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, of which this thesis is a part. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Kansas Sachem, Phi Delta Kappa, and Delta Phi Alpha.